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General Assembly

Official Records

Disarmament Commission

229th Meeting
Tuesday, 13 April 1999, 3 p.m.
New York

Chairman: Mr. Abdelaziz . . . . . (Egypt)

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

In the absence of the Chairman, Mr. Enkhsaikhan (Mongolia), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

General exchange of views (*continued*)

Mr. Abdullayev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I wish first of all, Sir, to congratulate you and the other members of the Bureau on your election to your posts at this session of the Disarmament Commission.

This session is taking place on the threshold of a new millennium, when the United Nations is taking stock of its past work and defining its tasks for the future. As a founding Member of the Organization and a permanent member of the Security Council, Russia is convinced that the United Nations must safeguard its proper, key role in today's world. It is precisely in the framework of the United Nations that the international community must seek agreement to resolve the problems facing mankind, resisting in particular any reversion to the cold-war mentality, in which the notion of "might is right" prevailed over the might of right.

In recent decades, we have gained a great deal of experience in resolving international problems, which constitutes convincing proof that genuine, effective settlements are possible only on the basis of strict respect for international law, first and foremost the Charter of the United Nations. In this regard, we are gravely concerned by attempts by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) to use military force to impose its will on sovereign Yugoslavia. However noble the end motivating these actions, it cannot justify the means that have been used. Peace and well-being cannot be built on the suffering of completely innocent people.

Unfortunately, such unilateral steps, taken in disregard of the United Nations and counter to the provisions of the Charter, can have only negative effects on the cause of disarmament. Therefore, because of events in the Balkans, the State Duma of the Russian Federation deferred the ratification of the START II treaty, which had been scheduled for March 1999.

The Russian Federation favours continuing an active, balanced process of disarmament. The United Nations has a primary role to play in promoting the conclusion and implementation of multilateral disarmament agreements. On the threshold of the twenty-first century, the Organization must, in our view, define further priority tasks and goals in the sphere of disarmament.

This guides our approach to the convening of a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. In our view, it is necessary to prepare for such a session painstakingly and thoroughly, so that it can conclude with the adoption of a substantial document reflecting consensus among countries concerning the multilateral disarmament agenda. Such a result will be possible only if the special session takes place in a calm, businesslike atmosphere free of confrontation and sterile polemics.

We understand the interest of States in the question of nuclear disarmament. It is precisely in this area where

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we have witnessed arms reductions of the largest scale: medium- and shorter-range missiles have been completely eliminated in the framework of the first stage of the strategic arms reduction process, and we have destroyed thousands of warheads and their launch facilities, including submarine-based facilities.

An important condition for further deep cuts in strategic offensive weapons is the safeguarding of and strict compliance with the Treaty between the United States and Russia on the limitation of anti-missile defence systems. The destruction of that Treaty would have dangerous consequences for strategic stability, for the process of the reduction of strategic offensive weapons and for the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, missiles and missile technology. We would like to see other nuclear Powers join in efforts to reduce nuclear weapons. In our view, the time has come to resolve this matter.

It is clear that it will take some time to implement bilateral, and eventually indeed five-party, agreements on further reductions in nuclear weapons. Only after we have moved through all the intermediate stages will it be possible in practical terms, and probably in a multilateral context, to discuss the matter of the total elimination of nuclear weapons. At the present stage an important, realistic approach to the process of nuclear disarmament would be to start talks immediately at the Conference on Disarmament on banning the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices.

I will not hide our concern about the ambitions of certain States to effectively limit the agenda of the special session to the set of nuclear items at this time when the real threat to the world stems from regional conflicts in which various kinds of so-called conventional weapons are being used. We are convinced that in the course of the special session there should be broad discussion of the range of problems of regional disarmament, confidence-building measures and control. We believe that the Working Group on guidelines on conventional arms control, which is to conclude its work this year, could come up with useful recommendations in this regard.

We believe that the United Nations must become the fundamental centre for the discussion of questions regarding the proliferation of light weapons and small arms. We support, in particular, the convening of an international conference on this problem.

At the same time, we think it premature to work on any radical measures of an international nature to limit legitimate deliveries of light weapons and small arms or to eliminate excess stocks of them. The delivery of weapons to satisfy the legitimate defence needs of the recipient country is entirely in keeping with Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, which enshrines the right of States to individual and collective self-defence.

We see the essence of the problem as being the illegal transfer of light weapons, the struggle against which must be a priority task of the international community. Russia would like to see the development of broad international cooperation to halt illegal trafficking in light weapons and small arms. This would include cooperation by law-enforcement, customs and licensing agencies and other governmental authorities. Various transparency measures should also be able to promote the achievement of this goal. Regarding another specific yet very important question involving the illegal transfer of arms, we regret that, in spite of the embargo declared by the Security Council on the delivery of arms to the territory of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, necessary measures are not being taken to prevent the supplying of arms to the Kosovo Liberation Army.

Russia considers the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones in various parts of the world to be an important means of reducing the area of the world in which there are nuclear weapons and of consolidating the non-proliferation regime on the basis of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Participation in such zones is the best way for the non-nuclear-weapon States to obtain legally binding security guarantees. It is important in this regard that the agreements on nuclear-weapon-free zones be in keeping with the international recognized criteria and legal norms and that they genuinely ensure the non-nuclear status of the region in question. We need to have a thorough study of the questions regarding the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones in specific regions of the world and precise definitions of the geographical configuration of the zones, of the obligations of participants and so on.

Russia has recognized the nuclear-weapon-free zones in Africa, Latin America and the South Pacific and has assumed the obligations devolving therefrom. We believe that dialogue between the nuclear Powers and the countries of South-East Asia will yield results, and this will permit Russia and its partners in the "nuclear five" to officially recognize a nuclear-weapon-free zone in South-East Asia. In general, this experience with the Bangkok Treaty must become a lesson for all those States that have been involved in the process of establishing

such zones. It demonstrates that a departure from universally acknowledged norms and rules in this matter or a violation of the principles of international law cannot go unnoticed.

As concerns other regions, we support the initiatives for the creation of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia, South Asia and the Middle East, as well as the initiative for a nuclear-free space in Central and Eastern Europe. We realize that the situation is different for each of these proposals, and in certain cases the chances of the objective being achieved in the foreseeable future are not great. Therefore, we are particularly satisfied by the fact that the States of Central Asia, with the support of the United Nations, are engaged in vigorous practical work on a draft treaty regarding this matter.

The Russian delegation counts on there being fruitful discussion in the Working Groups of the items on the agenda of session. We are sure that the Disarmament Commission will confirm its well-deserved reputation as a forum playing an important role in advancing the disarmament process and strengthening the role of the United Nations in this field.

Mr. Li Changhe (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): At the outset, the Chinese delegation wishes to extend its congratulations to Mr. Abdelaziz on his assumption of the chairmanship of the Disarmament Commission at its current session. His outstanding talent and rich diplomatic experience, I believe, will help steer this session to success. I would also like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation and gratitude to his predecessor, Mr. Martynov, First Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Belarus, for his contribution to the work of the previous session.

A new millennium is about to be ushered in with the passing of the twentieth century. This offers us a good opportunity to sum up past experiences and lessons and look into the future with the objective of striving for peace and international disarmament. The international situation has undergone dramatic and profound changes since the beginning of the 1990s, with the search for peace and development and the promotion of cooperation as the main themes of the times. Furthermore, remarkable progress has been registered in arms control and disarmament.

In the meantime, it has also been noted that the cold-war mentality is still with us and that challenges to national sovereignty, hegemonism and power politics manifest themselves from time to time. The tendency towards closer military alliance is on the rise. New forms of gunboat diplomacy are rampant. Regional conflicts have cropped up one after another. The mentality and practices of bullying the weak and small by developing state-of-the-art weaponry and containing and weakening other countries' military power under the guise of international arms control treaties and disarmament regimes are still popular with some countries. This is a fact of life today, and we believe that it runs counter to the international trend and hampers further accomplishments in the field of international arms control and disarmament. The times call for a new security concept and new ways to safeguard peace and security.

History shows that the old security concept, based on military alliances and build-up of armaments, will not be conducive to global security, nor will it lead to a durable world peace. It is desirable to establish a new security concept in line with the trend of the times and a new, just and fair international order. Only by so doing can we safeguard world peace and security and promote, in fundamental terms, the healthy development of the disarmament process. The Chinese President, Mr. Jiang Zemin, recently pointed out at the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva that the thrust of the new security concept should be mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality and cooperation. The five principles of mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality, mutual benefit and peaceful coexistence, together with other universally recognized norms governing international relations, serve as the political foundation for world peace. Mutually beneficial cooperation and common prosperity constitute the economic guarantee for world peace. Dialogues, consultations and negotiations on an equal footing by parties concerned represent the correct approach to resolving disputes and safeguarding peace. The Chinese delegation hopes that the international community will channel its efforts towards building a new concept of security and a new international political order, with the objective of achieving genuine progress on the disarmament front.

The Disarmament Commission, as a multilateral deliberative body on disarmament, has for many years played a positive role in formulating guidelines in the field of international arms control and disarmament. The United Nations reform should further enhance the role of the Commission and improve its efficiency so as to help the Commission make further contributions to maintaining world peace and security and promoting

international arms control and disarmament endeavours. It is not desirable to weaken or abolish the Disarmament Commission. The Chinese delegation has all along attached importance to the Commission and has participated in all its sessions with a constructive attitude. We hope that the current session of the Disarmament Commission will make further progress by building on the past and breaking new ground for the future.

Last year, the General Assembly again adopted a resolution calling for the Disarmament Commission to continue deliberations on an item entitled "Fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament". This attests to the importance the international community has attached to this item. The three previous special sessions of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, especially the Final Document adopted by the first special session, have played a positive role in guiding and promoting international disarmament. While it is true that certain remarkable progress has been achieved since the end of the cold war between East and West, it has nevertheless unfortunately been coupled with some practices that are not conducive to achieving the objective and fundamental purpose of international disarmament.

I wish to refer in particular to the development, deployment and proliferation of anti-missile systems and the attempt to amend, and even pull out of, the agreed arms control treaties that have developed and maintained a global strategic balance. Such new developments have turned outer space into a battlefield. This will inevitably produce a far-reaching negative impact on international security and stability and trigger a new round of the arms race, thus severely hampering or neutralizing the efforts committed to international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Moreover, clinging to or even expanding the nuclear deterrent doctrine and expanding and strengthening military alliances represent practices that run counter to the aspirations of the people of the world to beat swords into ploughshares.

At this juncture, when mankind is about to enter a new millennium, the Chinese delegation maintains that it is appropriate to convene the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD IV) to review all relevant issues, including the above-mentioned developments, so as to work out the objectives and orientation of international arms control and disarmament in the next century. This item has been under review by the Disarmament Commission for three consecutive years. Many delegations, including China, have put forward constructive proposals and views in this regard. We hope that all parties will enter into full cooperation and reach a consensus on the objectives and agenda of SSOD IV in the spirit of seeking common ground while putting aside differences.

Nuclear-weapon-free zones play a positive role in facilitating nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation and in promoting global and regional peace, stability and security. China has all along respected and supported the efforts by non-nuclear-weapon States to establish nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among themselves. China has undertaken unconditionally not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States or nuclear-weapon-free zones. Proceeding from this position, China has signed and ratified the relevant Protocols to the Treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga and Pelindaba. China supported the efforts by the South-East Asian countries to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in their region. We are working together with other countries concerned to seek an early settlement of all pending issues in a manner that does not prejudice the territorial sovereignty and maritime rights and interests of all countries concerned so as to enable all relevant parties, including China, to sign the Protocol to the South-East Asia Nuclear Weapon Free Zone Treaty at an early date. We have also adopted a positive approach towards the efforts to establish nuclear-weapon-free zones by other countries in the region.

The Chinese delegation is of the view that the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones should be in line with the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter, as well as the internationally accepted norms of international law. Nuclear-weapon-free zones should be established by the countries concerned on the basis of equality and of arrangements freely arrived at among themselves in the light of the actual conditions of their respective regions. The geographical scope of nuclear-weapon-free zones should not cover continental shelves and exclusive economic zones, nor should it cover areas of dispute between the States parties to the nuclear-weapon-free zone treaties and the neighbouring States over territorial sovereignty and maritime rights and interests. The existing security arrangements should in no way prejudice the status and character of nuclear-weapon-free zones, and the States parties to the treaties should not exempt themselves from their treaty obligations under any pretexts, including those based on their membership in a military alliance.

The Chinese delegation is pleased to note that the international community has generally recognized the role of nuclear-weapon-free zones in promoting nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation, and that there have been intensified efforts to establish nuclear-weapon-free zones. Against this backdrop, it is essential that the Disarmament Commission continue its in-depth deliberations on this item on the basis of the experiences acquired during the establishment and operation of these zones. This is of guiding importance to enhancing existing nuclear-weapon-free zones while establishing new ones and further promoting nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation. In this context, we hope that the Disarmament Commission will be able to live up to the expectations of the international community and reach consensus on this issue at an early date.

The current session will also continue its deliberations on the item entitled "Guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament, with particular emphasis on consolidation of peace in the context of General Assembly resolution 51/45 N". Last year, in-depth and extensive discussions were conducted on the questions of scope and practical disarmament measures to consolidate peace. This year, the Chairman of the Working Group has come up with a revised working paper based on the working paper distributed last year. Many delegations have conducted discussions and consultations on the revised working paper. The Chinese delegation stands ready to enter into further discussions and consultations on such a basis in order to reach an agreed text.

Given the different national conditions and complicated causes of conflicts, it is very difficult to come up with a set of guiding principles that is applicable to all countries or regions. In working out practical arms control/limitation and disarmament measures to consolidate peace, it is essential that such measures be in line with local conditions and be taken within an appropriate time-frame. It would be undesirable to mechanically copy or blindly follow the experiences of other countries or regions. The Chinese delegation hopes that the current session will, within its mandate, focus on the consolidation of peace in post-conflict regions while avoiding duplication of work on peacekeeping and humanitarian issues that is within the purview of other United Nations mechanisms.

The Chinese delegation maintains that in building and consolidating peace in conflict regions it is essential to follow the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter and the five principles of peaceful coexistence. It is essential also to take into account the relevant principles and proposals adopted by the Disarmament Commission. In formulating and implementing practical disarmament measures, it is imperative that the legitimate self-defence requirements of the countries concerned be taken into full account and in accordance with agreements freely arrived at among the parties involved in conflicts. Countries outside the regions but with influence on parties to the conflicts should undertake special responsibilities and obligations in promoting arms control and disarmament and in building and consolidating peace in the regions concerned.

The task before the current session of the Commission is arduous, and the international community is looking to us with earnest expectations. The Chinese delegation will, as always, fully cooperate with all delegations as well as with the Bureau, and make our due contribution so as to enable the Commission to register fresh progress in its work.

Mr. Mabilangan (Philippines): I would like to begin by congratulating you, Mr. Chairman, as you take on the important task of guiding us in our work. I would like also to join others in expressing our appreciation to Mr. Martynov of Belarus, who led us last year in the Commission. May I also thank Under-Secretary-General Dhanapala for sharing his wisdom, experience and expertise with us.

While we have achieved a great deal in the field of disarmament, much more has to be done — and soon. The longer we delay bringing an end to the existence of weapons of mass destruction, in whatever form and wherever they may be, the closer we will be to realizing the nightmare that these weapons can bring. And even as that nightmare continues to haunt us, the insecurity and mistrust these perverse weapons breed makes all of us live in a bad dream. As we continue to face the dangers of a world with nuclear weapons, we also have to deal with the threats posed by the unchecked growth and movement of conventional weapons.

A decade ago, we walked away from the bipolar reality that was the cold war. We ended a dark and fearful chapter of our history with hope in our hearts for a brighter and safer future. Today we are at the doorstep of that future, facing the frontiers of the new millennium.

Our Commission cannot by itself be expected to be the sole provider of answers. Its success is based not so much on the fact that we have agreed on many things, but that we have brought out, defined and discussed

matters in a way that should help us one day to come to an agreement on the issues that are in dire need of resolution. We must now move on to taking decisions, something that I am confident our Commission can and should do.

In the three years that we have been discussing the proposed holding of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD IV), we have come close to agreement on holding what could be one of the most important meetings on disarmament.

As part of a larger disarmament mechanism, the Commission should do all it can to promote agreement on the agenda and timing of SSOD IV. We need to discuss this and, as an organization of States, come to terms with the new challenges that face us.

The world has been transformed, yet the mindset of some remains mired in the utter dependence on nuclear weapons and nuclear deterrence that characterized the cold war, leading to the maintenance of nuclear arsenals and the proliferation of new ones. The opportunities for peace and progress in today's interdependent world are many, but they are threatened by the diversion of resources to weapons, by the build-up of conventional arsenals and by the proliferation and illicit movement of small arms.

The fundamental changes in today's global society and the advances in military technology and production, as well as the increasing ease in transporting goods and moving finances, all add urgency to the need to convene SSOD IV.

Many things prevent our Organization from doing what it can to solve the pressing problems that face our world. For example, the failure of a few to live up to their commitments to render their just dues means that the United Nations will continue to be deprived of the resources it sorely needs. In disarmament, the refusal of the very few to heed the call of the many may mean that SSOD IV will never be a reality.

While agreement on the objectives and agenda of SSOD IV remains elusive, we continue to be optimistic. Indeed, over the years there has been progress on SSOD IV, and there clearly is no lack of persistence and determination on the part of the vast majority to convene that session.

We join others in hoping that our discussions on this issue will be conducted in a spirit of compromise and cooperation and that our work during this session will help in arriving at a decision on the objectives, agenda and timing of SSOD IV.

Over the decades, many States have also made other decisions of importance relating to nuclear disarmament. As of today, 114 States have decided to free their regions of nuclear weapons, and many more are hoping to do the same.

While the Philippines supports the need to deliberate on the specific purposes, principles and guidelines for establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones, we do so with the understanding that the objective of this important exercise is to move nuclear disarmament forward. The Philippines will object to any attempt, no matter how well formulated, to enshrine guidelines that would, in effect, allow States to wield or threaten the use of these weapons of mass destruction or perpetuate in any manner the existence of nuclear weapons.

The Philippines also supports any discussions on the issue of single-nation nuclear-weapon-free zones. In 1987, just before the cold-war structures started to crumble, the Philippines adopted a policy of freedom from nuclear weapons pursuant to our most basic and organic legal instrument: our Constitution. We hope that our discussions will encourage others to consider similar actions. However, we hope also that we can avoid, and indeed we would resist, any notion that other States can impose limitations on the sovereign right of a State to make this determination.

In addition, while we would welcome international support for and acknowledgment of specific single-nation nuclear-weapon-free zones, we believe that international recognition as such is not a prerequisite to the legitimacy of such a sovereign act.

Important decisions on disarmament are also to be made in the area of conventional weapons. Today's tragic and often pointless conflicts are fought with conventional weapons, which almost always seem readily available in increasingly lethal doses, making the resolution of these conflicts even more difficult. International crime and terrorism also benefit from the ease with which conventional arms, particularly small arms, change hands. While the Ottawa process has proved successful, landmines continue to threaten lives and place national recovery efforts in jeopardy. In addition, growing conventional arsenals contribute very little to fostering trust and confidence among neighbours and in regions.

The Philippines welcomes and supports the efforts of those who seek to address in a broad, comprehensive and integrated manner all aspects of conflict and post-conflict situations. This is an approach that brings together political and material resources in a practical and results-oriented manner.

In particular, the Philippines supports efforts aimed at addressing the issue of small arms. From a practical disarmament point of view, the issue of small arms can be addressed not only from a disarmament or control aspect but also within the context of specific conflicts and situations. Much work has been done on this issue over the years, and we look forward to working actively with other delegations as we continue to seek solutions to this problem.

While the Philippines supports practical disarmament in the context of conventional weapons, we would like to think that disarmament in other areas need not necessarily be considered impractical.

In conclusion, I think we are being quite practical when I state that we share the optimism expressed by many here that our work for this session will be both fruitful and meaningful. At the same time, I cannot help but feel that this is a defining moment for the Disarmament Commission.

Mr. Méndez (Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I apologize on behalf of the Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Venezuela, who is unable to address the Disarmament Commission on this occasion.

May I convey my delegation's congratulations to you, Sir, on your assumption of the chairmanship of the Disarmament Commission for its substantive 1999 session. We are convinced that, through your leadership and knowledge, this Commission will attain the objectives that we have established. Please be assured of our delegation's cooperation. Likewise, we wish to extend our congratulations to the other members of the Bureau.

We also wish to express our appreciation to the First Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Belarus, Mr. Sergei Martynov, who presided over the Commission in 1998. I also wish to thank the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala, for the important thoughts he shared with us in his statement to the Commission yesterday.

Though I would not attempt to draw analogies between one process and another, for many developing countries the 1980s represented a decade that, at the economic level, did not yield positive results in terms of prosperity and economic and social well-being. Similarly, in the context of disarmament and arms control, although we seemed to be at the beginning of a new phase a decade ago, we find ourselves today in the midst of uncertainty.

The euphoria of the early 1990s was dispelled by the emergence on the world scene of new risks and challenges. The signing of important disarmament and arms control agreements suggested that the international community was prepared to implement wider-ranging measures in the sphere of nuclear disarmament. However, this has not been the case. Some analysts believe that disarmament diplomacy lacks direction and momentum. The uncertainty regarding the fulfilment of obligations under some of those agreements, along with other recent events, could jeopardize the norms that have progressively emerged in recent years.

In spite of this picture, in a world characterized by globalization and in which there is a convergence of forces of association and fragmentation, the multilateralism that the United Nations represents remains the appropriate path for meeting the challenges and resolving the problems that affect humankind and demand a collective response. That is why, in the sphere of disarmament, the United Nations, with the experience and legitimacy it has acquired, is the privileged forum for promoting the adoption of disarmament and arms limitation measures in order to strengthen international peace and security.

At a time of changes and transformations on the international scene, the Disarmament Commission, as a deliberative body, has ever greater relevance in the adoption of guidelines and recommendations on the important topics on the multilateral disarmament agenda. For the third consecutive year, the Commission is examining the subject of the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones, on which we hope to achieve important decisions that will allow us to make recommendations in this respect. We wish to draw members' attention to the document prepared by the Chairman of Working Group I, Ambassador Emilio Izquierdo of Ecuador, whose working paper contains important elements that we should all accord favourable consideration.

In this context, Venezuela believes that nuclear-weapon-free zones are an important measure for the strengthening of the non-proliferation regime and the promotion of the cause of nuclear disarmament. In this respect, we support any initiative aimed at the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the geographical region concerned, as in the case of the States of Central Asia, among others. We welcome the decision of the Government of Mongolia to declare its territory nuclear-weapon-free.

One of the subjects that has been added to the list of priorities of the disarmament agenda is the question of the illicit trade in arms, because of its grave impact on the stability and security of countries and on their economic and social development. The magnitude of the problem has been clearly highlighted by the Secretary-General, who points out that 90 per cent of the casualties of light weapons are civilian and that 80 per cent of those are women and children.

The proliferation and deterioration of conflicts throughout the world after the cold war highlights the need to establish measures to combat the illicit traffic in small arms. It is encouraging to see that some initiatives have been taken in the regional sphere, such as the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunitions, Explosives, and Other Related Materials; the moratorium decreed by the members of the Economic Community of West African States on the import, export and production of small arms; and actions undertaken by the European Union.

On the global level, we recognize the work of the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms. We welcome the decision adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 53/77 on the convening of an international conference on the illicit arms trade in all its aspects no later than 2001, the agenda and objectives of which will have to be defined by consensus among Member States.

The preparation by this Commission of guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation, with particular emphasis on consolidation of peace in the context of General Assembly resolution 51/45 N represents an important contribution to disarmament efforts. We believe, however, that, in this exercise or process, we cannot disregard the security and defence needs of countries, as recognized in the United Nations Charter, through the right to self-defence.

The convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament represents a matter of particular importance on which we all agree. This was evidenced by the adoption by consensus of resolution 53/77 AA at the last session of the General Assembly. Nevertheless, some differences of opinion on the agenda and objectives of that special session seem to have delayed its prompt convening.

Venezuela believes that the conditions exist for the holding of the fourth special session, as was pointed out by the Mexican representative speaking on behalf of the Rio Group, whose statement we fully endorse. We are convinced that the session will contribute to reaffirming the international community's commitment to disarmament and the role of the United Nations in the attainment of the objectives of general and complete disarmament under effective international control. We hope that this session of the Disarmament Commission will be a good opportunity for us to join efforts to overcome these difficulties, so that the session may be convened as soon as possible, which we consider of particular importance.

Lastly, I take this opportunity to inform members of the Commission that the Government of Venezuela will shortly be depositing its instrument of ratification of the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. In this way, our country will have observed all the formalities in order to become a State party to that important legal instrument of humanitarian scope. With this action, the Government of Venezuela reiterates its commitment to peace and to international law.

Mr. Kim Sam Jong (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): Please allow me to begin by congratulating you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the Disarmament Commission at the current session. I am convinced that, under your able leadership, this session will bear fruitful results in deliberating all the agenda items placed before us. My delegation stands ready for full cooperation with you and other members of the Bureau for the success of the session.

Today, the undisguised attempts to rely on power politics, as manifested in the maintenance of a policy of deterrence based on nuclear monopoly, military alliances, the build-up of arms and the development of new weapon systems, represent major obstacles to the effort to resolve issues of global and regional disarmament and security.

Because of these factors, fundamental problems remain unresolved, despite the ongoing, strenuous efforts for disarmament at the international and regional levels.

The complete elimination of nuclear weapons is the most urgent problem, among others, but no practical and legally binding measures have been taken, because of the theory and practice of nuclear deterrence. Furthermore, an arms race is being instigated as a result of the pursuance of political and military confrontation through the expansion and strengthening of military alliances and the use of force. Consequently, grave difficulties are being created that stand in the way of real progress on international and regional disarmament and security issues.

The situation on the Korean peninsula clearly shows the reality currently prevailing in the world. The United States forces remain in South Korea, providing a nuclear umbrella. Along with this, the move to expand and strengthen military alliances and beef up the armed forces continues. Recently, the attempt to introduce a new theatre missile defence system has entered a more blatant stage. This situation entails increased real threats to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and ultimately adversely affects disarmament efforts. Unless these threats — the root cause of the tense situation on the Korean peninsula — are removed, the issue of ensuring peace on the Korean peninsula will never be resolved.

All of these facts indicate that in order to resolve global and regional disarmament and security issues satisfactorily, the principle of impartiality for building mutual trust should be observed, rather than reliance being placed on power politics. The inequity of relations in which only a few countries possess nuclear weapons on a permanent basis and pose a nuclear threat to other countries should be eliminated. There should also be no tolerance of double standards, which allow certain countries to possess highly sophisticated and advanced weapons and continuously to improve them while denying other countries the same right. In particular, hypocritical acts, such as talking about disarmament and peace on the one hand and threatening other countries by strengthening military alliances and building up arms on the other, should in no way be overlooked.

From that perspective, my delegation believes that, if more progress is to be achieved, attention should be given primarily to ensuring impartiality in the deliberations on all the agenda items before the Commission at this session.

With respect to the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones, it is important to set their objectives properly. Nuclear-weapon-free zones could be created not only in areas originally free from nuclear weapons but in regions where nuclear weapons exist, as a way of ensuring either their destruction or their withdrawal. Accordingly, the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones would serve both non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament purposes. Since nuclear disarmament has become the primary task of disarmament — the ultimate goal is the complete elimination of nuclear weapons — the objectives of establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones should not be limited to aspects of non-proliferation, but should be directed towards expanding such zones, thus making the world free from nuclear weapons.

The obligation on the part of nuclear-weapon States to provide unconditional assurances not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against nuclear-weapon-free zone parties should also be clearly defined. If the nuclear-weapon States evade their obligation to unconditionally provide such assurances, under the plea that existing security arrangements must not be jeopardized, that is, in fact, tantamount to their opposing the very establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones. In the case of the Korean peninsula, if it, too, is to be denuclearized, the United States should make a political decision to rescind its nuclear umbrella over South Korea and cease its nuclear threat against the North.

With regard to the question of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD IV), it is also essential to respect the principle of impartiality if consensus on this matter is to be achieved. As long as unilateral interests are regarded as absolute, while the overwhelming support to convene SSOD IV is disregarded, it will be difficult to reach consensus on the objectives and agenda, even at the end of this fourth year of debate on that same matter. My delegation is of the view that SSOD IV should be convened as soon as possible in order to discuss, among other things, the central issue of completely eliminating nuclear weapons.

Mr. Mra (Myanmar): First of all, I should like to extend my warmest congratulations to Mr. Abdelaziz on his unanimous election as Chairman of the Disarmament Commission at its 1999 substantive session. I am confident that under his able leadership we will achieve substantive results in this year's deliberations. My congratulations also go to the other elected members of the Bureau and the Chairmen of the Working Groups. I can assure all of them of my delegation's full support and

cooperation for the successful outcome of this year's session. My delegation would also like to express its deep appreciation to Under-Secretary-General Jayantha Dhanapala for his comprehensive presentation of disarmament issues.

The yearly meetings of the Disarmament Commission allow us in-depth examination of specific disarmament issues on the agenda. As a specialized deliberative body within the United Nations multilateral machinery, the Disarmament Commission also provides us with a unique opportunity to make concrete recommendations on those issues for consideration and adoption by the General Assembly.

In accordance with the recommendations contained in resolution 53/79 A of 4 December 1998, this session will be considering three items, namely, "The establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the regions concerned", "Guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament, with particular emphasis on consolidation of peace in the context of General Assembly resolution 51/45 N", of 10 December 1996, and "The fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament". These are the three items we discussed at last year's session. There are a number of important documents on these items submitted for our consideration by the Secretary-General, as well as by some Member States. We also have before us papers presented by the Chairmen of the three Working Groups of last year's session. These documents provide us with a good basis to commence our deliberations.

Permit me now to briefly present the views of my delegation concerning the issues on the agenda. My delegation believes that the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned constitutes an effective measure to prevent the geographical proliferation of nuclear weapons and contributes to nuclear disarmament. The recent trend of more and more initiatives for the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones bears eloquent testimony to their relevance. It is most significant to note that existing treaties, such as the Treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga and Pelindaba, which serve as models for the promotion of other nuclear-weapon-free zones, have been emulated in other regions.

Myanmar supports the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones. Accordingly, Myanmar welcomed and supported Mongolia's decision to establish on its territory a single-State nuclear-weapon-free zone. Although the standard formula for creating such a zone could not be strictly applied in this case, Mongolia's commitment could greatly contribute to enhancing stability in the Central Asian region. The attempt by Belarus at the current session of the General Assembly to seek nuclear-weapon-free status for Central and Eastern Europe was commendable, although, in my delegation's opinion, broader consultations among all States in the region could have resulted in obtaining a wider margin of support for the draft resolution.

While on this subject, I would like to remind the Commission that Myanmar is a State party to the Treaty on the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone, which is designed to enhance peace, security and stability in the region. The Treaty has already entered into force, with effect from 27 March 1997. However, the protocol to the Treaty has yet to be accepted and ratified by the nuclear-weapon States. My delegation hopes that the nuclear-weapon States will take the necessary measures to sign and ratify the protocol at the earliest possible date.

The General Assembly has already decided to convene a fourth special session devoted to disarmament. The convening of this important session, however, is subject to the emergence of a consensus on its objectives and agenda. If we are to arrive at a consensus, we should set aside differences and, in a spirit of flexibility, seek common ground based on the ideas that have emerged from previous sessions. Any additional ideas should also be taken into consideration. Myanmar supports the early convening of a fourth special session, for only such a session will enable the international community to review in a most comprehensive manner the developments in the field of disarmament and international security that have taken place since the first special session on disarmament. Although it is envisaged that the fourth special session devoted to disarmament would discuss all disarmament-related issues in a most comprehensive and thorough manner, my delegation is of the view that nuclear disarmament should be given high priority in the agenda. It may be pertinent to mention here that my delegation is the sponsor of one of the General Assembly's resolutions on nuclear disarmament. The growing support it has received since its introduction in 1995 testifies to the importance that the international community attaches to the subject.

At the last session, the Working Group on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament

could not complete its review of the proposals on these matters owing to lack of time. My delegation hopes that this year we will have adequate time to make a thorough review of all proposals. Although some delegations feel the need to adopt a comprehensive and integrated approach, my delegation is of the opinion that in view of the complexity of the issues involved in matters concerning conventional arms control, we should focus on some selected aspects of the problem, such as illicit manufacturing, illicit trafficking and illicit use of small arms. Care should, however, be exercised in matters concerning the legal transfer of arms, for it is the legitimate right of Member States to manufacture, transfer and use small arms for their own security needs. However, the illicit arms trade, especially to insurgent groups operating within the territory of a sovereign State, should be restrained at all costs. My delegation certainly hopes that the Working Group will be successful in providing useful guidelines.

In keeping with the recent trend towards the rationalization of work within the United Nations system, the Commission should continue to make every effort to streamline its work so that it can give focused attention to a limited number of priority disarmament issues. We hope that from the current consideration of a three-item phased agenda, we can eventually move to a two-item phased agenda.

In conclusion, I would again like to reiterate my delegation's readiness to provide our full cooperation with a view to a fruitful outcome of this session.

Mr. Salazar (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation agrees with and supports what was said by the representative of Mexico on behalf on the countries members of the Rio Group. Allow me, nevertheless, to make a few additional comments on items before the Commission.

As a State party to the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (Treaty of Tlatelolco), Colombia considers the promotion of nuclear-weapon-free zones to be extremely important, because they make a concrete contribution to international security, to confidence-building measures and to the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. Every new nuclear-weapon-free zone represents progress towards the ultimate goal of a world free of nuclear weapons. In our view, nuclear-weapon-free zones must be established by the free will of the States of the region, and nuclear States have the obligation of respecting those decisions.

In this connection, we support the consolidation of the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty (Treaty of Rarotonga) and the Treaty on the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone (Bangkok Treaty), the early entry into force of the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty (Pelindaba Treaty), and the rapid conclusion of negotiations on a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia. At this session of the General Assembly, Colombia also supported resolutions on a nuclear-weapon-free southern hemisphere and adjacent areas, on Mongolia's nuclear-weapon-free status, and on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East. We are thankful to the Chairman of Working Group I for the document he has presented, which we consider to be an excellent basis for the work that we hope will allow us this year to adopt a document containing principles and guidelines for the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones.

Colombia believes that the present international situation requires a broad examination of disarmament issues and their relationship with international peace and security. Post-cold-war developments have shown that disarmament issues are again in the forefront of the concerns of the international community. A fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament would be the appropriate forum for such a review. This is the fourth year that the Disarmament Commission has considered this issue. For two years running, the General Assembly has adopted by consensus resolutions calling for the convening of a fourth special session devoted to disarmament, which demonstrates the international community's interest in this issue.

Last year, the Commission was very close to agreement on the objectives and agenda of the special session, and we therefore consider that the document submitted last year by the Chairman of the Working Group should be the basis for this year's work. Among the issues on which the Commission must reach agreement, it is important to include the review of the implementation of the Programme of Action adopted at the first special session devoted to disarmament, as well as the early convening of a fourth special session and the establishment of a programme of action for future work in the field of disarmament, particularly through multilateral negotiations.

Turning to the question of guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament, these guidelines could have practical applications in my country, which is currently involved in a peace process.

We in Colombia have been suffering from an internal conflict that has lasted for more than four decades. The armed conflict involves various players, including guerrilla groups and paramilitary groups; the latter are determined as a matter of principle to carry out criminal actions against subversive organizations.

The Government of President Andrés Pastrana started a process to negotiate a peace agreement with the objective of ending the conflict through a politically negotiated solution. In this context, with the aim of facilitating the negotiations, the Government proceeded to evacuate an area of 40,000 square kilometres, and legal measures were taken to allow the participation of the insurgents in the negotiations. This process reflects the hopes of the almost 40 million Colombians as manifested during the last presidential elections.

As is the case in most internal conflicts, it is the civilian population that suffers the most. That is why the first item in the Government proposal is a commitment by all parties to respect international humanitarian law. One of the aspects that most concerns my Government is the displacement of persons fleeing the violence of the conflict, many of whom are women and children.

The traffic in small arms and light weapons is a special problem, because these weapons are not only used in the direct conflicts between armed groups; they permeate civil society, increasing the level of violence and the number of victims unrelated to the internal conflict. Similarly, anti-personnel landmines are becoming a growing problem in our country and a threat to the population. The environment is also affected, in particular by oil pipelines being blown up, which causes oil spills in areas that are very difficult to clean up and decontaminate. A recent programme in Bogotá, the capital of the country, has shown beyond a doubt that disarming the civilian population reduces substantially the number of deaths.

The national Government has asked for the support and cooperation of the international community for this peace process, especially for the creation of an investment fund to provide the necessary resources for the development of social investment and job-creation projects in the zones of conflict. This is an initiative that favours social investment in the zones most affected by the violence. These projects will be funded by the Government, the private sector and the international community. The insurgent groups will share the responsibility for and management of these investment programmes.

If the peace efforts of the Government of Colombia are successful, we may be among the direct beneficiaries of the guidelines that we are considering here. In the discussions on the elaboration of these guidelines, it will be necessary to take care to maintain the balance between the idealism that post-conflict peace-building requires and the pragmatism that the complexity of these processes demands. My delegation looks forward to participating actively in the discussion and preparation of these guidelines.

Lastly, I want to reiterate my delegation's readiness to cooperate with the Chairman for the success of this session of the Disarmament Commission.

Mr. Lahiri (India): My delegation is pleased to see Mr. Abdelaziz chairing the 1999 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission and would like to join other speakers in congratulating him on his election. We would also like to take this opportunity to place on record our appreciation for the efforts and contribution of his predecessor, Ambassador Sergei Martynov of Belarus, in carrying forward the work of the Commission.

As a starting point for our work during this session, we have before us General Assembly resolution 53/79 A, as a guide and as a benchmark. Paragraph 6 of this consensus resolution provides for the Disarmament Commission

> "to continue its work in accordance with its mandate, as set forth in paragraph 118 of the Final Document of the Tenth Special Session of the General Assembly".

In fact, the Disarmament Commission has a special and onerous responsibility this year insofar as it seeks to address all three substantive issues on its agenda with a view to reaching a conclusive outcome.

The Chairman took the Chair.

One of the substantive issues on our agenda relates to the convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD IV). As we stand at the threshold of a new millennium, it is logical that the international community should review the current international situation and assess the progress towards disarmament. It is my delegation's firm belief that SSOD IV should focus on the priority issue of nuclear disarmament and put forward a positive and future-oriented programme building on the achievements

of the past in a seamless, smooth and continuous programme of action for the future. This would be possible by reaffirming the priorities agreed to by consensus in the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, with a view to preserving what has been achieved; evaluating where we stand at present; and defining a programme of action to pursue the unfinished task in the future, in a gradual brick-by-brick approach. For SSOD IV to be credible, it must focus on nuclear disarmament with a view to reaching consensus on this important subject through a flexible approach by all sides.

Since the 1950s India has been at the forefront of numerous initiatives calling for the abolition of nuclear weapons, both in the United Nations and in other international forums. These are too well known and adequately documented to need reiteration. Suffice it to say that, consistent with its past position, India today is the only nuclear-weapon State calling for a nuclear-weapons convention for the complete abolition of nuclear weapons from the face of the earth, on the lines of the global and verifiable instruments put together by the international community to tackle the other weapons of mass destruction — biological and chemical weapons. We see no reason why the international community should shy away from a similar measure to tackle nuclear weapons, the only remaining weapon of mass destruction. It is incongruous, to say the least, that nearly a decade after the end of the cold war, huge nuclear arsenals continue to exist, dangerous doctrines of first use continue to be embraced and efforts continue to refine nuclear weapons further. In fact, new justifications have been put forth for retaining nuclear weapons indefinitely. To reduce the immediate risk of nuclear conflict, India has underlined the imperative of reviewing nuclear doctrines and postures and de-alerting nuclear weapons through a resolution in the General Assembly. This initiative, entitled "Reducing nuclear danger", received widespread support. The importance of these and other initiatives aimed at delegitimizing the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons in building a propitious climate for abolition cannot be overemphasized.

The aspiration to a world free of nuclear weapons is widely shared. The twelfth Non-Aligned Movement summit, held in Durban in August and September 1998, called for negotiations on a phased programme for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons within a specified time framework, including a nuclear weapons convention. This Non-Aligned Movement consensus also found reflection in the Conference on Disarmament, where the Group of 21, as part of its proposal for the Conference's annual programme of work, has put forward a mandate echoing the Durban summit language for an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament.

Apart from nuclear disarmament, SSOD IV will also need to address a host of other issues crying out for attention and action. These include a review of the implementation of the Biological and Chemical Weapons Conventions, transparency in conventional arms transfers, measures against illicit transfers and regulation of conventional arms deemed to be excessively injurious or having indiscriminate effects, as well as a need to move away from discriminatory and ad hoc export control regimes and towards multilaterally negotiated, universally applicable, effectively verifiable non-discriminatory instruments to prevent proliferation. We also need to look ahead and evaluate the impact of developments in science and technology on the viability of existing international instruments. At the same time, the international disarmament machinery will need to be strengthened with clearly demarcated functions to respond to the challenges of the future.

Throughout this century, tensions and crises in Europe have threatened global security and have had as a result a disproportionate impact on the international disarmament agenda. The two World Wars began in Europe, but countries in distant continents were engulfed. In India, for instance, we lost more than 100,000 soldiers in the Second World War alone, and 3 million civilian lives, in what would now be called the collateral damage of the Bengal famine, were caused because Allied soldiers had to be fed in preference to colonized peasants. In the cold war that followed, the epicentre was again in Europe, but the rest of the world fought its proxy wars, and if it had erupted into nuclear war, the whole world would again have been drawn in and destroyed. We cannot, therefore, look on developments in the Balkans with any equanimity.

Apart from the impact which it has already had on regional peace, the implications of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) action in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia are far-reaching. If a group of countries or a regional arrangement can take it upon itself to act outside the United Nations Charter, in violation of its provisions, using violence against another sovereign State without the authorization of the United Nations Security Council, then the legal foundations on which international relations have been built since the end of the Second World War are gravely undermined. So too is the confidence of States in agreeing to disarmament measures, because if

countries can be attacked without sanction because its opponents are militarily more powerful, none would be prepared to lower its guard. Events in the Balkans therefore will inevitably have repercussions on the international disarmament agenda.

In the Special Committee on the Charter, which also began its session yesterday, a proposal has been made in which the General Assembly would, *inter alia*, ask the International Court of Justice to give an advisory opinion on the legal consequences for the maintenance of international peace and stability of the use of armed forces by a State or association of States against another sovereign State without the authorization of the Security Council. In the Disarmament Commission we need to consider the adverse consequences of such unauthorized use of force for the international disarmament agenda. We believe it is essential for SSOD IV to address this issue, and we shall, in due course, propose some language on this to the Working Group.

India has participated actively in the deliberations concerning SSOD IV during the last three substantive sessions of the Commission. Mindful of our commitment to pursue global nuclear disarmament with the objective of achieving a nuclear- weapon-free world, we will continue to engage constructively during the current session to evolve a consensus on the objectives and agenda of SSOD IV, whereafter the General Assembly will decide the date for convening the session. In this context, we fully support the elements included in the working paper presented at the 1997 session of the Disarmament Commission on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and other countries.

India has always believed that the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons transcends regional dimensions. Nuclear-weapon- free zones cannot do justice to the wide scope and the global nature of the threat posed by nuclear weapons. India, however, respects the sovereign choice exercised by non-nuclear-weapon States to safeguard their security interests through nuclear- weapon-free zones established on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned. At the Association of South-East Asian Nations Regional Forum in Manila last year, India stated that it fully respects the status of the nuclear-weapon free zone in South-East Asia and that it was ready to convert this commitment into a legal obligation. India remains responsive to the expressed need for such commitments from other nuclear-weapon-free zones as well.

The guiding principles for the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones are contained in the Final Document of SSOD I and the guidelines and recommendations for regional approaches to disarmament within the context of global security endorsed by the Disarmament Commission in 1993. We would like to reiterate our position on the subject as elaborated in our working paper presented at the last substantive session of the Disarmament Commission, which set out our views both on the principles governing nuclear-weapon-free zones and on the scope of deliberations under this agenda item, which we feel requires further consideration.

A comparative analysis of existing nuclear-weapon-free zones would be a useful exercise for studying specific features of various nuclear-weapon-free zones and for drawing lessons regarding the utility of such nuclear-weapon-free zones in achieving a nuclear-weapon-free world. Our deliberations in the Disarmament Commission should also encompass other relevant issues having an impact on nuclear-weapon-free zones, such as concepts relating to single-State nuclear-weapon-free zones, nuclear-weapon-free space or status, hemispheric nuclear-weapon-free zones, and so on. Finally, the impact of the latest nuclear doctrines put forward by nuclear-weapon States and their impact on nuclear-weapon-free zones should form an integral part of the Commission's work in arriving at conclusions during this session.

This session of the Disarmament Commission will also seek to reach consensus on the agenda item entitled "Guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament, with particular emphasis on consolidation of peace in the context of General Assembly resolution 51/45 N", of 10 December 1996. India believes that the Commission should focus on issues relevant to disarmament and avoid the duplication of work undertaken elsewhere in the framework of "An Agenda for Peace" or activities covered by the Fourth Committee. We should focus on elaborating guidelines for consolidation of peace in post-conflict situations that are applicable to the United Nations and/or competent regional organizations and restricted to recently ended conflicts in which all parties to the specific conflict have requested assistance from international bodies.

Given the diversity of conflict situations and the regional contexts, the guidelines for post-conflict peace consolidation should have the needed flexibility so as to have global applicability. Concepts or instruments with a limited validity and regional focus should be eschewed.

We already have a valuable resource base to draw upon, including work done in the Commission, which could add value to our task of finalizing the guidelines. There is also a need for developing guidelines for greater transparency and accountability in the manufacture and transfer of small arms and light weapons. A review of the contemporary international arms trade with a view to combating illicit transfers often linked to cross-border terrorism and the narcotics trade would be useful. We hope to move ahead to a successful conclusion of our deliberations under this agenda item this year.

My delegation looks forward to engaging meaningfully in the substantive deliberations during the session with a view to reaching consensus on all agenda items and in this regard would like to assure the Commission of our fullest cooperation.

Mr. Babar (Pakistan): Allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of this year's substantive session of the Disarmament Commission. Your appointment is a recognition of the high personal esteem in which you are held at the United Nations and of your expertise in the field of disarmament. We assure you of our full cooperation in carrying out your responsibilities efficiently and effectively.

I would also like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation to Mr. Sergey Martynov of Belarus for successfully steering the work of the Commission last year.

The end of the cold war opened up new opportunities to realize the vision of global peace. However, the events of the last few years do not augur well for such optimism. There are still over 30,000 nuclear weapons in operational readiness today. The entry into force of START II remains elusive. There are plans to develop anti-ballistic-missile and theatre-missile defence systems. These and other developments pose new and complex challenges to the international community on the eve of the new millennium.

The establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones was considered in 1978 by the special session of the General Assembly devoted entirely to the question of disarmament. Since then, nuclear-weapon-free zones have been established in several regions in order to promote regional and international peace and security.

Pakistan's own proposal for establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in South Asia was motivated by its consistent desire to preclude the possibility of an overt nuclear-arms race in the region. However, India's nuclear tests of last May dashed this hope. The tests drastically altered the strategic balance in the region, exposing Pakistan's security to an unprecedented risk. The clear asymmetries between Pakistan and India in conventional forces and the hostile statements by Indian leaders towards Pakistan in the wake of the tests left Pakistan with no option but to restore the strategic balance, in the interest of peace and security in South Asia.

Our nuclear deterrent now forms an indispensable part of our defence strategy and is an assurance in safeguarding our sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity. We do not have any ambitions beyond our security.

Although South Asia has been nuclearized now, Pakistan remains sensitive to international concerns about preventing further nuclear proliferation. We are observing a unilateral moratorium on further nuclear testing and have committed not to transfer sensitive materials, equipment or technology to other countries. The Prime Minister of Pakistan has declared that Pakistan's adherence to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) will take place once there are conditions free from coercion and pressure. We also remain opposed to a nuclear-arms race in South Asia.

Pakistan will continue to seek a comprehensive approach to building security and stability in South Asia. To this end, we have repeatedly affirmed our readiness to engage in any meaningful and results-oriented dialogue aimed at resolving all outstanding issues, especially the Jammu and Kashmir dispute; the establishment of a nuclear-restraint regime; and a balanced reduction of conventional forces.

As part of the confidence-building measures, Pakistan and India have undertaken to notify each other immediately in the event of any accidental, unauthorized or unexplained incident that could create the risk of a fallout with adverse consequences for both sides, or an outbreak of a nuclear war between the two countries, as well as to adopt measures aimed at diminishing the possibility of such incidents being misinterpreted by the other.

Pakistan has all along maintained that India was continuously engaged in the massive acquisition of weaponry. The recent testing by India of a new intermediate-range ballistic missile, Agni II, in the Bay of Bengal can only aggravate the conventional imbalance which already exists between the two countries. The

development of Agni II therefore adds to our concerns and is a threat to our security.

Despite these recent events in South Asia, Pakistan continues to support the nuclear-weapon-free zones in Latin America, the South Pacific, Africa, South-East Asia and Central Asia. It also supports the proposal for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, in accordance with the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions.

Last year marked the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD I). It is the only comprehensive document on disarmament adopted by consensus at the largest, most representative meeting of nations ever held to consider disarmament issues. It is now time to assess the implementation of SSOD I and outline a future course of action in the field of disarmament, arms control and related international security matters. We support the convening of SSOD IV for this purpose.

In our view, SSOD IV must address the issue of nuclear disarmament as a priority issue. It must review the new challenges confronting the international community that are manifest in programmes to develop new types of nuclear weapons, new doctrines which contemplate the use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States, theatre missile defences and anti-ballistic missile systems. We should also monitor closely any development towards the militarization of outer space.

In the area of conventional weapons, the special session should examine the widening inequalities between countries in the area of conventional weapons, formulate proposals to curtail the development and proliferation of increasingly lethal conventional weapons, and address regional disarmament issues.

As regards the third item on the Commission's agenda — the outlining of guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament, with particular emphasis on consolidation of peace — my delegation supports the concepts laid down in General Assembly resolution 51/45 N. The principles to be formulated by the Disarmament Commission must also conform to the criteria laid down in the Final Document of SSOD I, especially those relating to the necessity of maintaining a balance in the defence capabilities of States at the lowest level of armaments as well as safeguarding the inalienable right to self-determination of peoples under colonial or foreign domination.

These are our views on some of the recent events relating to arms control and disarmament and on the agenda items of the Commission. We look forward to participating actively in the debate on all issues before us and I assure you, Sir, of the fullest cooperation of my delegation in making this session of the Disarmament Commission a success.

Mr. Cho (Republic of Korea): I would like to begin by expressing my delegation's warmest congratulations to you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the United Nations Disarmament Commission at its 1999 session. I am convinced that, under your able leadership, our deliberations will achieve fruitful results.

Let me also thank Under-Secretary-General Dhanapala for the comprehensive introductory statement he made at the beginning of our meeting yesterday. His well-organized and articulate thinking on the key issues before us will surely help guide us towards productive debates.

As a specialized deliberative body and subsidiary organ of the General Assembly, the Disarmament Commission has played a significant role in the field of disarmament, together with the First Committee of the General Assembly and the Conference on Disarmament. As Under-Secretary-General Dhanapala rightly pointed out, it has been making important contributions to the evolutionary process of global disarmament norm-building by seeking to identify general principles and guidelines and suggesting concrete measures needed to achieve them. My delegation attaches particular importance to the work of this year's session of the Disarmament Commission, since this session is supposed to finalize its deliberation on the three key issues mandated by General Assembly 53/79 A. In this regard, my delegation sincerely hopes that this year's discussion will be able to produce a successful outcome by finally reaching agreement in a spirit of compromise on the specific recommendations on those crucial issues.

The establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones has contributed to the strengthening of the nuclear non-proliferation regime as an important complement to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). It enhances global as well as regional peace and security. My delegation is pleased to note that 114 States have now signed treaties establishing nuclear-weapon-free

zones covering more than 50 per cent of the Earth's land mass.

While continuing progress has been made towards the establishment of such zones in various parts of the world, formidable challenges still remain in some regions, including South Asia. We hope that the newly posed danger of nuclear proliferation, which undermines the global nuclear non-proliferation regime, can be averted through more intensified diplomatic efforts aimed at making those regions nuclear-weapon-free.

In this connection, we also wish to stress again that the Joint Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula of 1992 by the two Koreas should be fully implemented as soon as possible. We firmly believe that the early implementation of the Joint Declaration to the fullest extent will further contribute to the strengthening of the global non-proliferation regime as well as to peace and security on the Korean Peninsula and beyond.

With regard to the Commission's work of formulating the general principles and guidelines related to the establishment of the nuclear-weapon-free zones, the Chairman's working paper, based on the deliberations of previous years, seems to provide a good basis for the final agreement. My delegation provided our views on this issue during last year's debate. However, given the importance we attach to this issue, we would like to underline once again that nuclear-weapon-free zones should be established on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned, taking into full account the specific security circumstances of that region.

We also believe that the principles of international law, including that of free navigation on the high seas and the inherent right to individual or collective self-defence, as enshrined in the United Nations Charter, should not be undermined.

Furthermore, once an agreement is reached and has entered into force among the parties, it is vitally important to its successful functioning for the parties to the arrangements to faithfully implement that agreement. In this regard, we believe that an effective verification mechanism, such as full-scope International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards, should be ensured.

This year, the Disarmament Commission will again address the issue of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD IV). We all approach this subject bearing in mind General Assembly resolution 53/77 AA, adopted by consensus last year, which decided to convene SSOD IV subject to the emergence of a consensus on its objectives and agenda. We hope that this welcome development will lead to a satisfactory conclusion of this agenda item during this session.

The Republic of Korea is already on record as voicing its support in principle for convening the special session. Considering the remarkable developments in the field of international non-proliferation and disarmament, as well as the fundamental shift in the international security environment since the end of the cold war, we continue to believe that it is time for us to review the most critical aspects of disarmament and to chart a future course of action in the field of disarmament.

It is our view that SSOD IV should address various aspects of disarmament in a balanced manner, with equal attention being given to weapons of mass destruction and conventional weapons, covering past, present and future agendas. We believe that as we do so, the growing threat of missile proliferation will need to be addressed in a focused manner. Considering the serious consequences of possible missile proliferation, the question of how to tackle this issue remains one of the major challenges which the international community should tackle with the utmost urgency.

We also need to intensively explore possible ways and means to secure the universality of major international conventions and treaties on disarmament and non-proliferation, such as the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the Chemical Weapons Convention. We hope that we can work harder at this session to reach consensus on the objectives and agenda, as well as on the timing, of SSOD IV, as mandated by the General Assembly.

I should now like to turn to agenda item 6, "Guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament, with particular emphasis on consolidation of peace in the context of General Assembly resolution 51/45 N". My delegation supports the Disarmament Commission's initiative to formulate those guidelines, since we believe that we need appropriate norms to cope with the destabilizing impact of conventional weapons, such as small arms and light weapons. In setting those guidelines, we deem it necessary to place emphasis on practical disarmament measures, such as control of small arms and light weapons, the illicit arms trade and transparency in armaments.

In this regard, my delegation attaches great importance to the recommendations of the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms, established by General Assembly resolution 50/70 B. My delegation therefore maintains that we need to take the reports of the Panel into full account in formulating the guidelines.

We also appreciate initiatives to combat the illicit trade in and spread of small arms and light weapons, such as the joint action by the European Union and the Declaration of a Moratorium on the Importation, Exportation and Manufacture of Small Arms and Light Weapons in West Africa by the Economic Community of West African States.

Furthermore, we believe that greater transparency and openness in armaments can improve confidence among States and strengthen regional and international peace and security. In this context, the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms is an effective instrument which we believe has helped ease tensions and prevent a conventional arms race by reducing mistrust.

In closing, my delegation wishes to pledge it fullest cooperation to you, Mr. Chairman, in our common endeavours to achieve the successful conclusion of this session.

Mr. De Moura (Brazil): I wish to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, on your election. I also wish to congratulate the other members of the Bureau. Your vast experience in disarmament affairs will certainly guide us through a productive session. May I also express our appreciation to your predecessor for the efficient way in which he conducted the work of this Commission last year.

I wish to commend Under-Secretary-General Dhanapala, under whose leadership the Department for Disarmament Affairs is playing an invigorated role and successfully cooperating with other multilateral bodies. I thank him for his presentation to the Commission and for his remarks on our agenda.

We acknowledge that the Commission has been able to adapt its working methods to face new challenges and changing circumstances. We welcome the efforts for the rationalization and streamlining of the work of the Disarmament Commission, and support the results achieved so far.

This session is taking place at a highly complex moment in the disarmament arena. Since we last met, encouraging progress in the areas of chemical weapons and anti-personnel landmines has been achieved. As regards nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, however, there are not so many reasons for a positive assessment.

Turning to the first item on our agenda, I wish to highlight the point, made yesterday by Mr. Dhanapala, that from the Treaty of Tlatelolco in 1967 to the Treaty of Bangkok in 1995, four inhabited regions of the world, covering 114 countries, are now free from nuclear weapons. This underlines the fact that half the globe is covered by treaties establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones, and also reminds us of the pioneering role of the Treaty of Tlatelolco.

For the countries situated in the area of Tlatelolco, it is now more than 30 years since we first launched the idea of banning nuclear weapons from our territories. Brazil, as well as its Latin American and Caribbean neighbours, is perfectly aware of the benefits of living under such a regime. In this context, Brazil encourages the countries involved to complete the process of creating a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia and encourages initiatives by some countries, such as Mongolia, to establish a single-country nuclear-weapon-free zone.

We believe that the working paper presented by Ambassador Izquierdo of Ecuador represents a good basis to express a common, agreed understanding on the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones as arrangements freely concluded among States. In this regard, the support given to resolution 53/77 Q, entitled "Nuclear-weapon-free southern hemisphere and adjacent areas", among other relevant resolutions, makes it clear that the gradual implementation of a nuclear-weapon-free world is a concern of the entire international community. In our view, the large number of votes in favour of that resolution expresses the support of the majority of the international community for initiatives in favour of the consolidation and expansion of nuclear-weapon-free zones.

Under agenda item 5, the Commission will again review the convening of a special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, a proposal which can count on our support. Brazil is ready to help bridge the existing gap so as to reach a consensus on the objectives and the agenda of the special session. As regards the agenda, we support the inclusion of items relating to conventional weapons and confidence-building matters,

without prejudice to the issue of the elimination of weapons of mass destruction.

The special session could provide the international community with a valuable opportunity to make an overall assessment of the work done in the areas of disarmament and non-proliferation since the 1950s. This approach will be especially relevant in relation to the post-cold-war period since, though considerable progress has been achieved, the persisting signs of impasse and negotiating inflexibility may jeopardize the way forward in the field of disarmament. We believe that flexibility and goodwill are necessary to create a positive atmosphere at this moment of particularly intense international negotiations, as we approach the convening of the third session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2000 Review Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the conference on the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

As regards agenda item 6, on guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament, the Brazilian delegation will continue to work on the basis of the working paper presented by the Chairman of Working Group III, Mr. Michael Hoey of Ireland. We are convinced that the Disarmament Commission should also take into consideration the work undertaken last year by the Security Council on the question of the illicit trade in small arms in Africa and the results of the Council's debate on the question of dealing with post-conflict situations. The discussion of this item involves issues that are not disarmament issues in the strict sense of the word, such as post-conflict peace-building, the restoration of law and order in societies torn apart by internal conflict and the control of small arms within societies. As we pointed out in the Commission last year, although the measures being considered in the area of conventional small arms are valuable on their own merits, they should not be considered as a replacement for the existing disarmament agenda.

The Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunitions, Explosives, and Other Related Materials, adopted by the Organization of American States (OAS) on 13 November 1997, provides a regional approach to the problem, which, we feel, could offer positive input in regions where the question of small arms proliferation is a problem to be tackled.

Regarding other conventional arms, there is a need for increased transparency. We stress the need to turn the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms into a truly universal instrument. Brazil has consistently provided data to the Register. Members of the Organization of American States have recently agreed on a draft inter-American convention on the transparency of acquisitions of conventional arms, which reinforces at the regional level the voluntary obligations foreseen by the United Nations Register. We hope that the draft convention will be adopted by the OAS General Assembly when it meets next June.

Finally, I wish to reiterate Brazil's commitment to the cause of disarmament and its willingness play a constructive role in international efforts. By having joined the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and having ratified the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) last year, the Brazilian Government has reinforced its credentials to ask for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. Moreover, while debating the ratification of the CTBT, the Brazilian national congress issued a clear mandate for the Government to pursue, with renewed dedication, the objectives of disarmament and non-proliferation. In fact, General Assembly resolution 53/77 Y, entitled "Towards a nuclear-weapon-free world: the need for a new agenda", based on an initiative that my country, along with your own, Mr. Chairman, had the honour to join in sponsoring, suggests a series of steps in that direction. It is also in fulfilment of that mandate that the Brazilian delegation reaffirms its support for the work of the Commission and for United Nations activities in the area of disarmament.

Mr. Abou-Hadid (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): I wish at the outset to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of the Disarmament Commission for the 1999 session, which bears witness to your wealth of experience in the disarmament field. We are confident that, with your well-known sense of responsibility, you will guide our delicate work this year to success. We wish also to congratulate the other members of the Bureau and the Chairmen of the three Working Groups on their election. We wish them all success as they carry out their tasks; we have every hope that they will justify the trust that members of the Commission have placed in them.

My delegation thanks Mr. Dhanapala, Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, for his continued efforts and those of all the other members of his Department to reach the priority goals of the Department, which in our view should contribute to the achievement of nuclear disarmament and the elimination

of all weapons of mass destruction. We reaffirm what Mr. Dhanapala said in his introductory statement: that the Disarmament Commission is the General Assembly's deliberative forum specializing in the field of disarmament. We also agree with him that in the Commission all States can contribute to formulating disarmament recommendations. They can all propose the concrete measures needed to reach our objectives and can help enunciate principles consonant with the purposes of the United Nations Charter regarding the maintenance of international peace and security.

This session is especially important because it is the last session at which the current substantive agenda items will be discussed. Many countries share our view that at this session we must reach consensus on finalizing the principles, guidelines and recommendations that can help the international community on questions of disarmament and arms control. The three substantive items are on our agenda because of the great importance the international community attaches to them. Here let me recall the 8 July 1996 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons, which affirmed that the unique characteristics of nuclear weapons, in particular their destructive capacity and their capacity to cause untold human suffering, and their ability to cause damage to generations to come, make them potentially catastrophic. The Court also found that their destructive power cannot be contained in either space or time, and that they have the potential to destroy all civilization and the entire ecosystem of the planet. The advisory opinion further affirmed that there exists an obligation for all States to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control.

On the basis of the principles of its foreign policy, which are focused on the maintenance of international peace and security, and in accordance with the principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter, as well as in the overall framework of general and complete disarmament, the Syrian Arab Republic has spared no effort to support United Nations resolutions pertaining to disarmament. The Syrian Arab Republic has been a party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) since 1969 and is committed to its safeguards regime. Syria has repeatedly declared its support for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East. Moreover, Syria was the first to propose officially, at the 1989 Paris Conference on Chemical Weapons, that, under United Nations auspices, the region of the Middle East should be rendered free of all weapons of mass destruction — nuclear, chemical and biological.

Syria's objective is to create for succeeding generations a world in which peace and stability prevail, a world in which peoples will not see a repetition of that dark chapter of human history in which nuclear weapons were used at Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Syria has repeatedly reaffirmed its keen interest in the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. We would like to reiterate our profound concern with the insurmountable obstacle Israel has placed in the way of the establishment of that zone by refusing to adhere to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Israel continues to persist in this refusal despite the fact that all States of the region have adhered to the Treaty. Israel alone remains outside the Treaty. It persists in its refusal despite the international community's recognition of the extreme harm that this intransigent Israeli position does to the credibility and the universality of the NPT. The international community is aware that Israel's refusal is the practical obstacle in the way of the establishment of the nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East.

In this context, we must ask how a nuclear-weapon-free zone could be established in the Middle East without Israel first adhering to the NPT. Israel is the only country in the region that has thus far not done so. It is the only country that is determined to maintain, increase and develop its nuclear stockpiles. How can we expect to put an end to the nuclear-arms race and races of other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East? How can a nuclear-weapon-free zone be established in the Middle East when Israel alone possesses a huge military nuclear programme outside the non-proliferation regime, with the accompanying grave dangers this poses to the present and future peace and security of the peoples of the region? Does Israel's position not reveal its lack of seriousness and its circumvention of the efforts made by the United Nations to establish such a zone, in particular when Israel continues to demand the holding of fruitless negotiations with each State of the region individually? In this context, we believe that the United Nations should play a greater role in the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones.

The renunciation of nuclear weapons is the genuine guarantee of international peace and security. If the international community, as represented in the

Disarmament Commission, is truly serious about reaching fruitful results during this session, we expect it to demand that Israel renounce the option of nuclear weapons and that it take serious and effective steps to place its nuclear facilities under the International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards regime and to adhere to the NPT.

It must be reaffirmed explicitly that there is a need for respect for and implementation of the treaties and conventions in the disarmament field, especially those pertaining to the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. There is a need to urge all those countries that have thus far not signed these agreements — particularly those that possess nuclear weapons — to do so, and they should seriously seek the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone that covers both the northern and the southern hemispheres. This should be done in parallel with the efforts made for the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in different regions.

My country strongly supports the position of the Non-Aligned Movement on the convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. Such a session would be an occasion to review all aspects of disarmament under the current international conditions. It would provide an opportunity to direct the attention of the international community first towards the elimination of weapons of mass destruction and then towards the control and reduction of conventional weapons. We continue to believe that the main priorities set forth in the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament still enjoy broad international support.

In accordance with the purposes and principles of the United Nations, we call for an end to the excessive production, development and stockpiling of conventional weapons. At the same time, we take into full account the legitimate and inalienable rights of States to self-defence, self-determination and resistance to international occupation. The States that have the largest military arsenals must attempt to achieve substantial reductions in their stocks of conventional weapons, with a view to maintaining and consolidating international peace and security.

We would like to point out in this regard that the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms in its current form fails to address the concerns of the vast majority of States. There is a need for balance. Such arrangements must be comprehensive and must not be confined only to exports and imports of certain types of weapons. The Register should, rather, cover all types, including weapons of mass destruction, foremost among them nuclear weapons. It must not be confined to conventional weapons alone.

Finally, we believe that the third item, which is before the Commission for the third consecutive year, is an important and delicate matter that touches on the security of all countries without exception, and in particular small developing countries. In view of the item's extreme delicacy and sensitivity, we believe it must be dealt with in the future purely from a disarmament perspective and that other subjects — extraneous subjects that are under consideration in other relevant United Nations bodies — must not be introduced into consideration of this item.

It must be recognized that the scope of this subject should be focused on post-conflict periods, during which the States parties to conflicts find themselves in difficult situations that require special understanding and special treatment. To have international legitimacy, any international intervention must be a positive one. Its objective must be the creation of an atmosphere conducive to the establishment of peace. We also believe that any such international intervention must be consistent with international law and the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

The meeting rose at 5.35 p.m.